



**DENOMINATIONAL INSPECTION
REPORT**
(Under Section 48 of the Education Act 2005)

on

**THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL
AND
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

School: St. Thomas' Catholic Primary School

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School URN: 112903

Headteacher: Mr Michael Geraghty

Chair of Governors: Mrs Kirsty Andrews

Inspectors: Mrs Anne Recchia
Mrs Jane Monaghan

Date of Inspection: 5 November 2013

INTRODUCTION

The inspection of this school was carried out on behalf of the Bishop of Nottingham under Canon 806 of Canon Law and Section 48 of the Education Act 2005 in accordance with the Diocese of Nottingham Schedule for Section 48 Inspections. The inspection reviews and evaluates how effective the school is in providing Catholic education. The process begins with the school's own self-evaluation and the inspection schedule is in line with the criteria set by the National Board of Religious Inspectors and Advisers (NBRIA).

During the inspection, the inspectors observed 8 Religious Education lessons and 2 Acts of Collective Worship.

Meetings were held with the headteacher, the subject leader for Religious Education, the chair of governors, the link governor for Religious Education and the parish priest. Discussions were also held with pupils and parents.

The inspectors scrutinised a range of documents including the Self Evaluation Form (SEF) planning documents, assessment and tracking pupil progress data, subject leader's portfolio, governors' meetings minutes, Catholic Life and Collective Worship documentation and examined the work in pupils' Religious Education books.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

St. Thomas's Catholic Primary School is an average sized school, situated in the town of Ilkeston. There are 247 pupils on roll of which 192 are baptised Catholic (78%). 17% of pupils are from other Christian denominations, 1% of pupils are from other faith backgrounds and 4% of pupils have no religious affiliation.

The school is served by the parish of St. Thomas of Hereford and pupils are drawn from the wider geographical area of Ilkeston.

The very large majority of pupils are of White British origin and there are hardly any pupils who speak English as an additional language. The proportion of pupils supported through the pupil premium is lower than in most schools. The proportion of disabled pupils and those who have special educational needs supported through school action is above average. The proportion of pupils supported at school action plus or with a statement of special educational needs is below average.

The school is about to embark on a major refurbishment of the buildings with new classrooms being built and existing accommodation being remodelled.

INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

OVERALL EFFECTIVENESS

1

CATHOLIC LIFE

1

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

KEY FINDINGS

St. Thomas' Catholic Primary School is an outstanding Catholic school which makes outstanding provision for Catholic education. The school is a very welcoming community with tangible evidence for upholding the precepts of the common good. The majority of priorities since the last inspection have been met fully and the continuous drive for improvement benefits the whole school community.

- The Catholic Life of the school is outstanding. School leaders, staff, governors and parents have a shared vision and high expectations with regard to Catholic mission and ethos. Key strengths of the school are the excellent and cohesive relationships which exist between home, school and parish. Staff are superb role models; team working, collaboration and recognition of each other's gifts makes for a thriving Catholic worshipping community. Parents are invited to participate fully in school life. Governors are highly committed and give of their time generously for the benefit of the school community.
 - The quality of Collective Worship in the school is outstanding. Staff work hard in creating opportunities for pupils to plan and lead worship. Liturgical formation is a priority and all staff are supported effectively in this by the headteacher and senior leaders. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is greatly enhanced by high quality Collective Worship.
 - The quality of Religious Education in the school is good. All teaching and assessment for learning is at least good with some delivery being outstanding. Outcomes for pupils in Religious Education are good. Pupils value and enjoy Religious Education and all groups make good progress.
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WHAT DOES THE SCHOOL NEED TO DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- Give pupils time to act on teachers' comments and respond to suggested areas for improvement in their work.
- Continue to develop the analysis of the school's tracking system for pupils to ensure that all groups of pupils are making progress and that any underachievement in Religious Education is picked up and addressed swiftly.
- Develop systems of formal monitoring and evaluation by governors for the Catholic Life of the school and Collective Worship.

CATHOLIC LIFE

THE QUALITY OF THE CATHOLIC LIFE OF THE SCHOOL

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| ▪ The extent to which pupils contribute to and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school. | 1 |
| ▪ The quality of provision for the Catholic Life of the school. | 1 |
| ▪ How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for the Catholic Life of the school. | 1 |

Pupils contribute and benefit from the Catholic Life of the school to an outstanding extent. Almost all of the pupils are at the centre of shaping the school's mission and they appreciate and value the part they play in its evolution. As a consequence, they share ownership of it. Pupils' voice and leadership is developing effectively and their views are feeding into whole school planning. Pupils have a deep sense of belonging and pride in the school. They know the part they play and value their own and others' unique qualities. They go out of their way to share their good fortune with those who are less fortunate than themselves especially through their close links with a school in Gambia. The school's mission statement is referred to regularly in lessons and Acts of Worship; pupils understand and live it in a sincere and genuine way. The behaviour of almost all pupils is exemplary at all times. They understand that service is an important part of life at St. Thomas' and work hard in a joyful way to serve God and those around them through their work and play. The leadership team and staff work creatively to provide a rich, vibrant environment where the religious identity of the school is strong and immediately evident. Pupils respond to this by participating enthusiastically in the curriculum, Collective Worship, parish and diocesan activities and charitable giving. They enjoy and learn from the opportunities to link with other children and adults from different backgrounds. Most notably, the links forged with a Muslim school in Derby have given pupils the chance to ask searching questions and share their own beliefs with others.

The leadership team and staff are enthusiastic and devoted to providing high quality Catholic education for each pupil and commit themselves to the principles underpinning the mission statement. The quality of relationships within the school is outstanding; there is a real sense of a community working together in a joyful and supportive way. Teaching and support staff provide excellent role models and they are highly regarded by pupils. The

excellent pastoral care of the pupils ensures that every child matters. Pupils feel valued even when facing difficulties. There have been no exclusions for at least ten years. Pastoral programmes are well taught and celebrate Catholic teachings and principles.

The headteacher is deeply committed to the Church’s mission in education and provides an excellent role model and inspiration for his staff and the whole community. He sees this as his core leadership role. The monitoring of the Catholic Life of the school and the evaluation of findings are carried out in both an implicit and explicit way. The headteacher regularly reports on the Catholic Life of the school to governors and parents, seeking their views through discussion and questionnaires. Governors are enthusiastic, well informed and supportive, giving of their time generously and holding the school to account. Well-targeted and planned improvements involve key partners so that areas for development can be tackled in a systematic way and strengths can be celebrated. The school’s self evaluation does however err on the side of caution and should recognise the outstanding contribution of staff and pupils to the overall Catholic Life of the school.

COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

THE QUALITY OF COLLECTIVE WORSHIP

1

- How well pupils respond to and participate in the school’s Collective Worship.
- The quality of provision for Collective Worship.
- How well leaders and managers promote, monitor and evaluate the provision for Collective Worship.

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Acts of Collective Worship are generally interesting and engage pupils in a meaningful way. Pupils participate enthusiastically through prayer, music, dance and drama. There is a tangible enthusiasm for Collective Worship throughout the school, which is reflected in the quality of prayerful silence, the depth of participation in both formal and spontaneous prayer and communal singing. The planning and leadership of Collective Worship by pupils, although fairly recently undertaken, has developed rapidly. Teachers provide excellent examples and support. Class teachers have a good understanding of the purpose of Collective Worship and the different forms it can take. They are becoming increasingly skilled in helping pupils to plan and deliver Acts of Collective Worship. There is now an increasing reliance on pupils taking the lead as they progress through the school. They have a growing understanding of the Church’s seasons and feasts and are becoming skilled in the use of different prayer styles, artefacts and biblical texts appropriate to their age and ability. They are also developing the skills to evaluate liturgy in order to improve and refine it.

Collective Worship has a profound and visible impact on pupils’ spiritual and moral development. They are able to provide examples of how worship and prayer affects their lives in a meaningful way irrespective of ability and faith background. The school fosters a deep sense of respect for different faiths and provides pupils with opportunities to engage with people from different backgrounds from an early age. This has led to a real understanding and appreciation of the differences and similarities between faiths.

Praying and worshipping together is part of the daily experience for staff and pupils and as such is central to the life of the school. The headteacher and senior leadership team have given it a high priority in terms of training, time, planning and resourcing and as a result, Collective Worship is highly valued and appreciated within the whole school community. Parents and other adults including parishioners are often invited to liturgical celebrations and response to this is very good. Parents report that they feel welcome and included.

The headteacher and subject leader have a thorough understanding of the Church's liturgical year, its seasons, rites and symbols and are able to lead the school in a deepening appreciation of these traditions. The emphasis on relevant and contemporary Collective Worship using resources and ideas that engage pupils has led to an outstanding pupil response to this provision. Staff training and adult formation in the development of liturgy and spiritual understanding has been well focused and enthusiastically received. Leaders are role models of outstanding practice to the rest of the staff and pupils. The leadership team regularly seeks the views of parents, pupils and staff regarding the quality and importance of Collective Worship. Leaders and managers place the highest priority on quality experiences of Collective Worship in their regular reviews of school performance. Formal monitoring of Collective Worship is systematic and evaluative, forming part of the on-going self evaluation and leading to continuous development and improvement.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE QUALITY OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

2

- How well pupils achieve and enjoy their learning in Religious Education.
- The quality of teaching and assessment in Religious Education.
- How well leaders and managers (including governors) monitor and evaluate the provision for Religious Education.

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2

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Pupils enjoy Religious Education and say why they value it. One Upper Key Stage 2 pupil commented, 'we have to think deeply and it's challenging'. Pupils view Religious Education as very important; passion and commitment in learning is evident in the lessons observed. Behaviour for learning is excellent, pupils concentrate very well and the majority work independently without direction from adults. From their starting point in Early Years (Reception Class) through to Upper Key Stage 2, pupils are encouraged to be independent, imaginative and to interpret signs and symbols. In Key Stage 2, pupils are able to engage with religious ideas and apply them to their lives. Knowledge is acquired quickly and pupils become increasingly secure in their religious understanding. Progress at the end of Key Stage 1 is good with almost half of the pupils exceeding diocesan expectations; this improving picture is set to continue. At Key Stage 2, a large majority of pupils make progress and achieve diocesan expectations with half achieving above and a small minority achieving well above. The school is working hard to develop an accurate picture of assessment and tracking of pupil progress in Religious Education. To improve these systems further, staff now need to analyse data to ensure that all groups of pupils make at least 'expected' progress and where this does not happen, to identify and address any slippage swiftly.

Teachers are fully committed to delivering high quality Religious Education lessons. Of the lessons observed, almost all were good with some outstanding practice in Early Years and Key Stage 2. Teachers display high levels of confidence, expertise and subject knowledge in Religious Education. Planning is detailed, appropriate use of resources including ICT and a range of teaching strategies ensure that good learning takes place. In the outstanding lessons observed, teachers systematically check pupils' understanding, manage time well and intervene so that learning moves on briskly. Teachers differentiate tasks well to meet the needs of all pupils. Good assessment strategies are being developed though there needs to be more consistency in this area. Marking and constructive feedback is excellent in some year groups and this should be shared across the school, however, pupils need to be given time to respond to advice from their teachers on how to improve and move their learning on.

The leadership of Religious Education is outstanding. The subject leader is new to the role and has embraced the area fully and with energy. She is affirmed and encouraged by the Headteacher. Colleagues and pupils feel very well supported. This key role could be further enhanced by building in regular non-contact time to allow for monitoring and evaluation. The link governor for Religious Education takes an active part in the subject development, thereby ensuring that it has a high profile in the school which permeates to all areas of school life generally. However, a more formal system of governor monitoring now needs to

be established. The Religious Education curriculum is designed to meet the needs of all pupils and staff commented that the 'Come and See' programme is having a profound impact in the development of pupils' knowledge, skills and understanding. The subject leader has been proactive in inviting representatives from other world religions to talk to the children. Visitors from the Muslim and Jewish communities introduce the children to an awareness of life beyond that of their immediate locality. Partnership with a school in Gambia is a feature of the school's outreach work. The parish priest and members of the wider community are a regular presence in school; they help pupils to gain first-hand experience of the liturgical life of the Catholic Church. The parish priest recently led Upper Key Stage 2 pupils on the subject of 'vocation in life'. This gave a powerful message, increasing pupils' knowledge of the priesthood. Religious Education is very well resourced; capitation is commensurate with that of other core subjects ensuring that all staff are able to deliver effective lessons in a stimulating environment. The Religious Education curriculum meets in full the requirements of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.

WHAT INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS MEAN

Within the report, the following grades are used:

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Requires improvement
Grade 4	Inadequate

In the context of the whole school, the overall effectiveness grades have the following meaning:

Grade 1	Outstanding	The school is a highly effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are exceptionally well met.
Grade 2	Good	The school is an effective Catholic school. Pupils' needs are met well.
Grade 3	Requires improvement	The school is not yet a good Catholic school, it is not inadequate however, there are aspects that require improvement.
Grade 4	Inadequate	There are features in need of urgent and immediate attention. The school is not meeting the basic minimum requirement for adequacy. The school will receive a monitoring visit within twelve months.

